



**HOW THE U.S. HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IS
KILLING BLACK WOMEN**

IN WITH A RUNNY NOSE, OUT IN A BODY BAG.

A Presentation by Chelsea Carter



WHAT WE'LL DISCUSS TODAY

Presentation Guide

Introduction

The Horrors for Black Women and Pregnancy

The Myth Surrounding Black Women and Pain

The Intersection of Race and Socioeconomic Status in Healthcare

Distrust of Medical Professionals

Conclusion



Introduction

THE UNITED STATES HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IS CURRENTLY COMMITTING A RACIAL MANSLAUGHTER AGAINST BLACK WOMEN.

In this presentation, I will address the health disparities that are prevalent for black women and I will hypothesize what steps to be taken to abolish these disparities and for healthcare providers to take the lives of black women seriously.

THE HORRORS FOR BLACK WOMEN AND PREGNANCY

Why do black women have such high maternal mortality rates?

The horrors of pregnancy treatment, specifically for black women, are not highlighted nearly as much as they should be. Everyone loves discussing the beauty of bringing a new life into the world. From creating and growing a small human, to giving birth and welcoming the baby into the world, having a child can bring to anyone many overwhelming emotions, but people typically don't discuss the fear that is associated with pregnancy. For black women, these fears of the worst possible thing happening are often a part of their reality when they are expecting.

According to the *American Heart Association News*, black women are 3 to 4 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes (2019). This article, titled "Why are black women at such high risk of dying from pregnancy complications?" states that many of these pregnancy-related deaths could have been prevented if doctors made an effort to listen to black women.

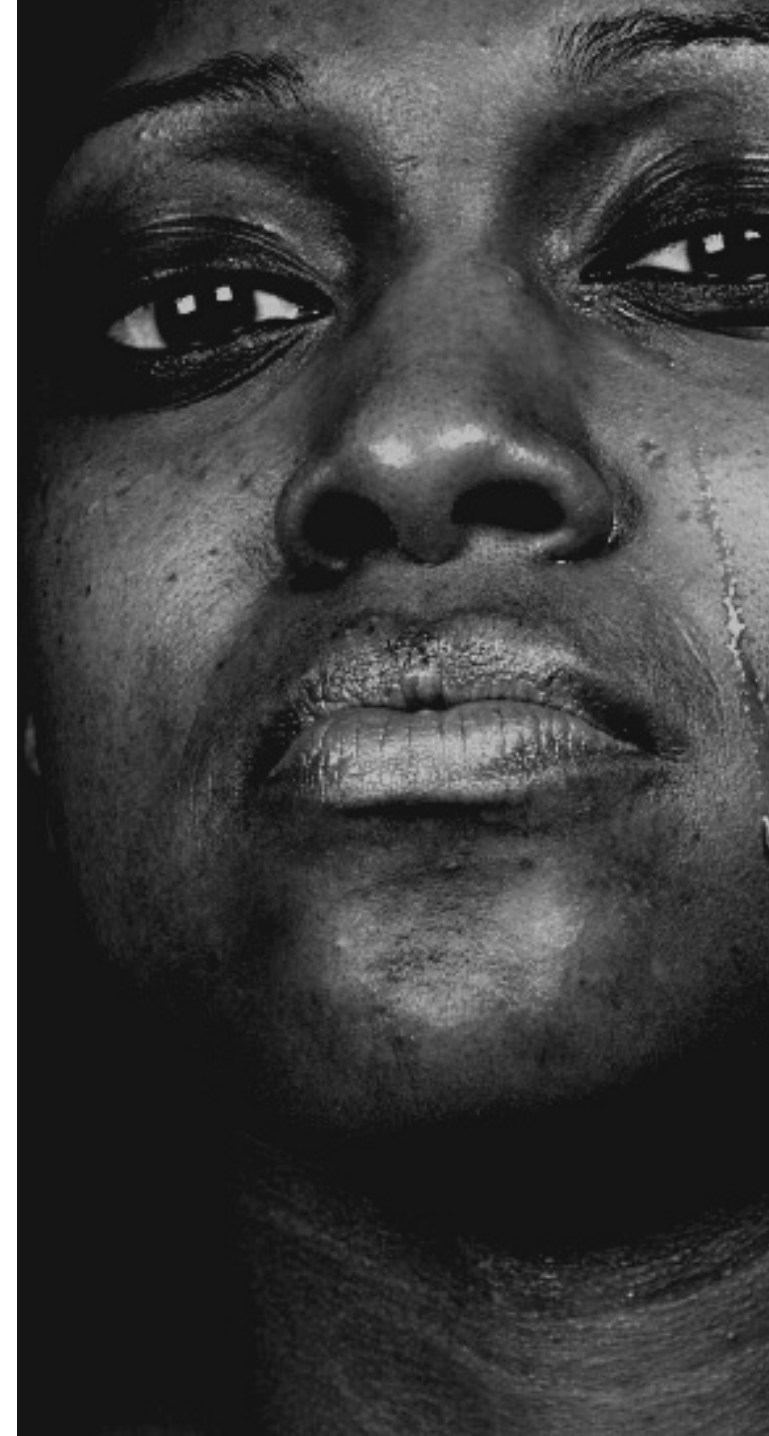
Too many doctors write off the pain of black women as something minor when there is a serious underlying health issue that is affecting these women. There are too many instances where the only thing that is saving a black woman's life is her instinct to beg the doctors to do something about what she is feeling. This demonstrates that the cards are stacked against black women, often before they even step into a waiting room.

THE STIGMA SURROUNDING BLACK WOMEN AND PAIN

Why do doctors refuse to listen to black women?

Several medical professionals claim that in medical school, they were taught that black women have a higher pain tolerance than most people, and that is why they typically dismiss the pleas of black women when they are in pain (Swetlitz, 2016). This sentiment is racist in itself, but it also doesn't make any sense in terms of medical treatment. If black women truly had a higher pain tolerance, wouldn't doctors be alarmed that a black woman came to get treated for this pain? The myth of black women having a high pain tolerance is just an excuse for doctors to deflect their own racial bias. Doctors repeatedly dismiss the pain of black women because of systemic racism in healthcare.

According to New York Times Magazine, doctors are using the same rhetoric that people used during colonial times to justify their enslavement of African Americans. Linda Villarosa discusses America's racist history of experimenting on the black body. She presents the example of the work of Dr. Thomas Hamilton, a man who believed that there were many physiological differences between white and black people and tried to prove this by cutting into the skin of John Brown to see how deep his skin went. According to Villarosa, the work of doctors like Dr. Hamilton is still studied and reviewed in medicine today, despite its racist origins and its falsehoods about black people and pain.





THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IN HEALTHCARE

The relationship between a black woman's income level, social status, and health status needs to be examined through an intersectional lens.

According to the American Psychological Association, socioeconomic status affects every aspect of a human being's life, but it especially affects one's physical and mental wellbeing (2017). People who have a lower socioeconomic status, which mainly consists of having little to no education, being a felon, being impoverished, or having poorer physical health in general have fewer opportunities for good healthcare than others (American Psychological Association, 2017). All of these factors disproportionately affect African American communities.

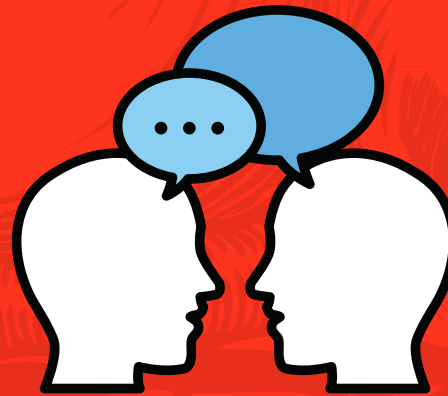
Some medical professionals treat all black women poorly, regardless of socioeconomic status. However, a poor black woman is not likely to be treated the same as a wealthy black woman. An educated black woman is not likely to be treated the same as an uneducated black woman. A black woman who appears to be unhealthy, or fat, will not be treated the same way as a black woman who appears to be healthy, or thin. All of these elements of our identity affect the ways that people, and doctors, treat us. Some of us have more privileges than others, and even though we are fighting the same fight, it is important to acknowledge that some have to fight much harder than others.

Distrust of Medical Professionals

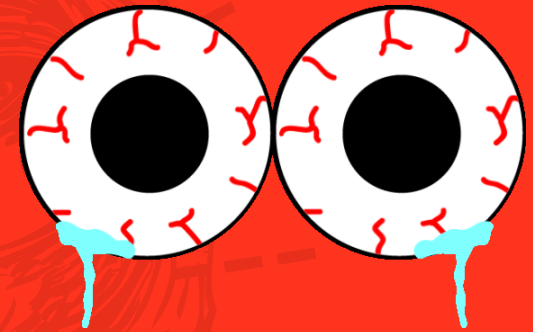
WHY DO BLACK WOMEN HESITATE WHEN SEEKING MEDICAL ATTENTION?



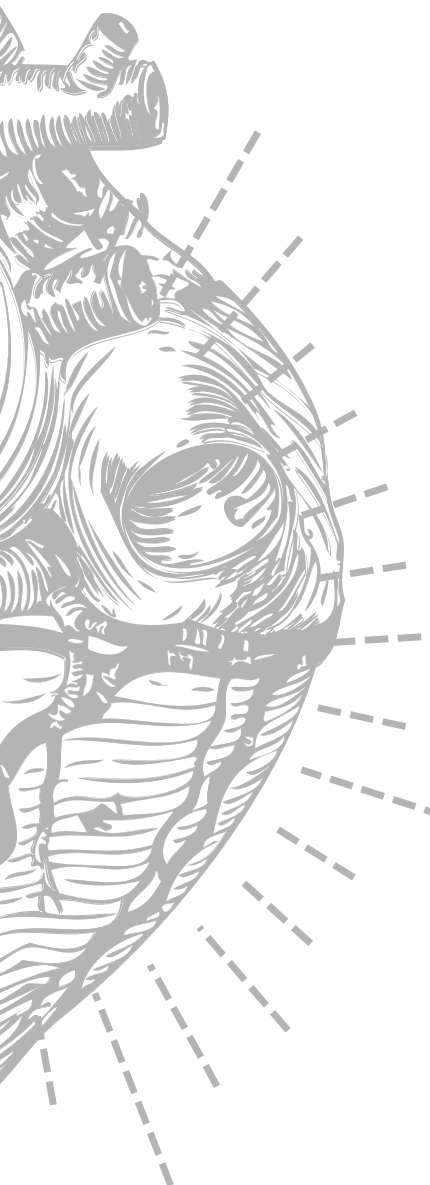
Medical Injustices:
The United States has a history of using black bodies as test subjects to change the world of medicine.




Lack of Interpersonal Communication Skills:
Doctors who lack strong interpersonal communication skills and interpersonal competence are more likely to garner distrusts from black patients.



Dismissal of Pain:
When doctors choose to ignore the pain of their black patients, they are a part of the problem and contribute to medical mistrust within the black community.



**A HISTORY OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS
DELIBERATELY MISTREATING BLACK WOMEN,
ALONG WITH THE DISPARITIES IN
HEALTHCARE THAT BLACK WOMEN
EXPERIENCE, MUST BE ADDRESSED BY
HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AT THE
NATIONAL LEVEL.**



**THERE IS A LOT OF DAMAGE THAT MUST BE
UNDONE, BUT IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE. AN
EFFORT TO MAKE HEALTHCARE FOR BLACK
WOMEN CHANGE FOR THE BETTER IS THE
LEAST THAT THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CAN
DO, BECAUSE BLACK WOMEN HAVE DONE SO
MUCH MORE FOR IT, WITHOUT EVEN HAVING
A CHOICE.**

HOW MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS CAN REDUCE IMPLICIT BIAS

How Medical Professionals Have Been Trying to Reduce Implicit Bias:

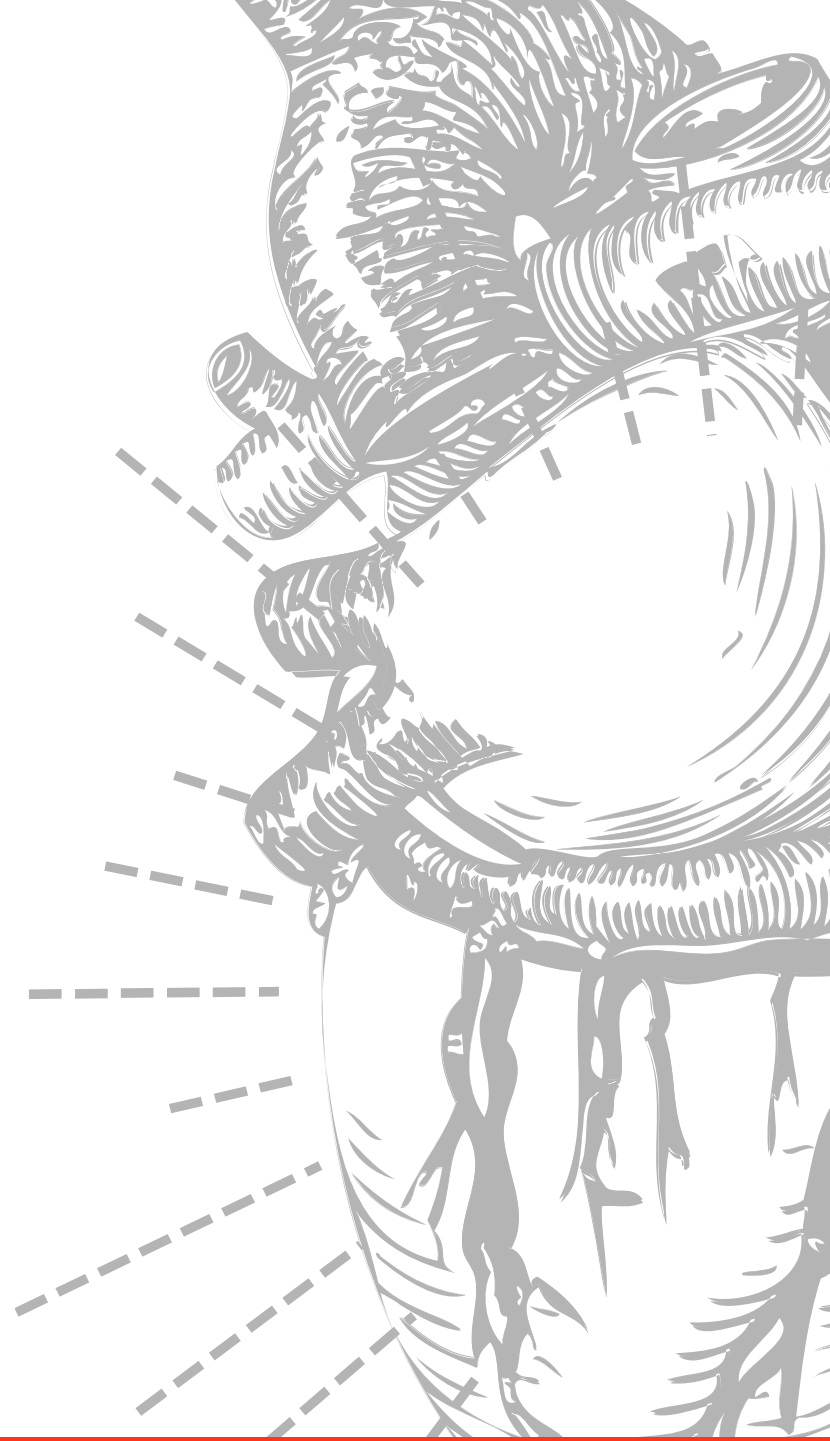
- Replace stereotypes
- Build relationships between healthcare professionals and patients

For healthcare workers:

- Acknowledge implicit biases
- Practice empathy
- Gain knowledge and understanding of patients' cultures and experiences
- Use the Teach-Back Method with patients

Teach-back method is a technique for health care providers to confirm that they have explained medical information to their patients clearly and effectively so that the patients understand what they are being told.

(IHI Multimedia Team, 2017)



QUOTES

FROM BLACK WOMEN I INTERVIEWED WHILE DISCUSSING IMPROPER
HEALTHCARE

"Me, myself? I don't think they ever cared about me. The only time that I felt like they cared was when I got private insurance."

Anonymous

2021

"When Black women and men complain about pain, a lot of the time doctors don't believe them. Doctors won't test them for a lot of issues because they believe Black women don't feel pain, and a lot of Black women have serious health issues that doctors just dismiss as a weight issue."

Vicki Carter

2021

"One of the reasons I didn't want more kids was because I was scared I would die while giving birth."

Keisha Carter

2021

QUESTIONS?



For more information, look for my thesis on Digital Commons
after May 2021!

Contact me @ ccarter37@murraystate.edu



WORKS CITED

Research

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Slide 6: Ethnic and Racial Minorities & Socioeconomic Status. July 2017, www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/minorities.

Slide 10: Multimedia Team, IHI. "How to Reduce Implicit Bias." Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 28 Sept. 2017, www.ihl.org/communities/blogs/how-to-reduce-implicit-bias.

Images

Slide 5: <https://noflyonthewall.com/2016/02/19/859/>

Slide 6: <https://www.thelily.com/what-will-it-take-for-america-to-understand-the-pain-of-black-women/>

Slide 9: <https://womeninwhitecoats.com/the-shoulders-i-stand-on/>

